

Best Marketing Tool???

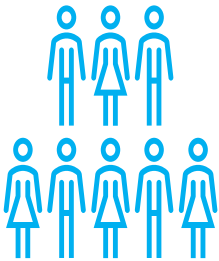
By Greg Kronlund AIB



As members of a **Barbershop Harmony Society** chapter, we often complain about diminishing membership, or declining audience, or being the best kept secret in our community. We search for blame, without looking within.

I have long believed that our best marketing tool is four-part harmony *well sung*. Yet we keep it to ourselves. We stay cloistered in our rehearsal space, we entertain each other singing tags, and we rely on one or two members to sell sixty tickets each. Your best marketing tool is singing in your community.... Sing it and sing it well.

The late Keith Eckhardt promoted an outreach program he called “**Random Acts of Harmony**.” Sing till they kick you out!



If you're promoting a show, send out your chorus, VLQ, or quartets to public places, sing and engage with the public with your event information. If you have a show poster campaign, find a strip mall, ask the store owner(s) if you can place a poster in the window, then sing for the owner and customers as a thank you. Hand out invitations to the show as you leave.

At best, you had fun singing and you picked up a couple of audience members. If nothing else, you promoted your chapter to the public.



Sing where audience and potential new members “**Hang- out**,” because they're not in your rehearsal space unless you invited them.

What if You Had a Guest Night and Nobody Came???

True Story

This happened to me twice. The first time I was **Membership VP**, planned an elaborate showcase of our chapter, and relied on the membership to spread the word and invite guests. The big night arrived, and I brought my guest.... The only guest of the evening.



Lesson 1: I didn't consult or ask for help from the **VP of M/PR**.

Lesson 2: **VP of M/PR** didn't realize this was part of the job.

Lesson 3: **Membership** was not engaged in guest nights at all.

Guest Night falls under both *internal* and *external* marketing. You can judge the effectiveness of your membership's buy-in to the event by size of, or lack of, guests attending. If your membership is not inviting people, it is time to rethink the event.

External Marketing is a major part of finding new members.

Internal Marketing involves member retention. The questions to ask is how will this increase our membership, and how will it affect our current members? If you don't have a marketing budget for the guest night, how are you going to advertise it? Are there more effective and efficient ways to grow your membership



One Chapter decided to drop **Guest Night** in favor of making "every Tuesday" guest night. When an invited guest arrived, the chapter made



sure to offer a warm greeting, introduced the director and section leader, and introduced the guest to a "riser buddy" for the evening. At the end of the night the guest received a welcome letter, and a trifold of tidbits about the chapter,

membership requirements and an invitation to come back next week.

The section leader made a follow-up call to learn from the guest's perspective how they felt about their experience and invited them to return. The chapter gained insight about working with guests and adding new members.

Lesson 1: The guest experienced a typical rehearsal not a showcase “sales pitch”.

Lesson 2: Members did not surround the guest trying to “rush” them into “pledging” the chapter.

Lesson 3: The guest had time to understand the chapter before making a commitment of time and money.

Lesson 4: These new members became more active with the chapter



Guest Nights have been a long-standing event to encourage new members. Many chapters find remarkable success with this event, but if these events have fallen on challenging times, look to your marketing plan.

Guest Night is another example of the relationship between the **Membership VP** and the **VP M/PR!** Whatever your recruitment events look like make sure marketing is in your consideration.

“You Can Sing Too”

As you can tell I believe in using the 4 P marketing strategy.



For 24 years, I sold radio advertising but billed myself as a marketing consultant. As I matured in the profession, I realized that I only understood ¼ of the necessary elements of marketing. I only understood the element that required expenditures.

That’s when I began learning about **Product, Price and Place**. I mentioned that **marketing is the homework** and ***advertising is the test*** because it’s true. If you don’t have a quality plan in place, you can spend enormous amounts of money with zero results.

A case in point: Many years ago, BHS decided to promote a national guest night. The Society selected a week and created advertising materials. The print, radio, and television ads were available to all chapters. Unfortunately, the Society dropped the national campaign. Meaning the local chapters would advertise their own guest night, using the professional quality materials developed for the national campaign.



A tale of Two Chapters: One chapter spent \$750.00 on a guest night, had 37 guests, 12 repeats the next week, and 7 new members. An acquisition cost of \$107.15 per member. The chapter used **Product**, **Price**, and **Place** to understand *where to promote* the event. This was a high acquisition cost, but annual dues brought acquisition down by \$30.00. The final acquisition cost dropped to \$77.15 per new member. If this chapter had done a little more pre-planning the results might have been even more successful.

A second chapter invested a reported \$10,000 in advertising with 3 guests attending. I don't know which chapter or district this was in, but the report is astounding.



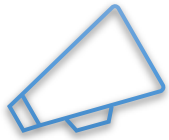
Lessons Learned: Know your **product**. Who uses it, how often, what's in it for your guest? What is your differentiation? What sets you apart from other community entertainment organizations?

Understand your **price**. What will it cost your end user in time, money, energy, and commitment?





Understand your **place(ment)**. Where is the venue, how will the end user find you, where does the end user learn about your product? How will the end user feel after the event? Win their hearts and minds.



With this information you're ready to understand **promotion**. Who is your end user, age, gender, income, presence of children under 12, household size, education, and occupation? Where does your end user get information, internet, radio, television, newspaper, flyers? As you plan, make sure you **MATCH** your media channel to your end user (customer/guest). It makes no sense to try to sell a 12-year-old your new flavor of bubble gum on an "All-talk" radio station. Look for the best match possible.

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